

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall, Marshall's Yard, Gainsborough, DN21 2NA on 15 July 2025 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Owen Bierley (Chairman)

Councillor Frazer Brown
Councillor Stephen Bunney
Councillor Paul Lee
Councillor Lynda Mullally
Councillor Roger Patterson
Councillor Mrs Lesley Rollings
Councillor Trevor Young
Councillor Paul Key

Also Present: Councillor Emma Bailey

In Attendance:

Bill Cullen	Interim Head of Paid Service
Alan Bowley	Interim Director of Operational and Commercial Services
Sally Grindrod-Smith	Director Planning, Regeneration & Communities
Sarah Elvin	Homes, Health & Wellbeing Team Manager
Russell Clarkson	Development Management Team Manager
Danielle Peck	Senior Development Management Officer
James Makinson-Sanders	Economic Growth Team Manager
Ele Snow	Senior Democratic and Civic Officer

Apologies: Councillor Christopher Darcel
Councillor Jeanette McGhee

Membership: Councillor Paul Key was appointed substitute for Councillor Christopher Darcel

8 TO OPEN THE MEETING AND APPOINT A CHAIRMAN

The Democratic Services Officer opened the meeting and explained that the first item of business was to appoint a Chairman for the meeting. Proposals were duly sought.

A Member of the Committee proposed Councillor Owen Bierley, this was duly seconded.

A recorded vote was proposed and seconded. On being put to the vote, votes were cast in the following manner:

For: Councillors O. Bierley, F. Brown, S. Bunney, P. Key, P. Lee, L. Mullally, R. Patterson.

Against: Nil

Abstain: Councillors L. Rollings, T. Young

With a total of seven votes cast in favour, no votes against and two abstentions, it was

RESOLVED that Councillor Owen Bierley be appointed Chairman of the Committee for the purpose of this meeting only.

Councillor Bierley took the chair and proceeded with the agenda'd business.

9 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

10 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee held on 3 June 2025 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

11 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

12 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

With no comments, questions or requirement for a vote, the Matters Arising Schedule, setting out the current position of previously agreed actions as at 7 July 2025, was **DULY NOTED**.

13 ASYLUM DISPERSAL IN WEST LINDSEY

The Committee gave consideration to a report presented by the Homes & Health Team Manager which provided Members with an update on the Asylum position in West Lindsey and sought approval for the spend of the Asylum Dispersal Grant funding. It was explained that the Home Office introduced a new system for Asylum Dispersal implemented in 2023 which saw the interim housing of asylum seekers across England and Wales dispersed across the Country as appose to certain areas taking all the burden. When this new system was implemented, alongside these new arrangements, funding was provided to Local Authorities to ensure front line services were not impacted and Local Authorities could implement new services where required to assist with wellbeing, mental health and community cohesion.

The Home Office had partnered with different agencies across the country to deliver the dispersed accommodation, with Serco being the provider in the East Midlands. In West Lindsey, there were 41 bedspaces procured by Serco for Asylum seeker accommodation.

Funding was provided to Local Authorities for every bedspace that is procured and brought online in the area, and West Lindsey had received £185,350 of funding for this to date. The funding had a set of criteria for spend on asylum and refugee related activities based on the outcomes as detailed in the Asylum Dispersal Grant funding criteria.

Members heard that the paper set out how the funding was proposed to be utilised through spending on front line services and offering grants to community organisations who were delivering services which met the funding criteria. It was highlighted that the paper would also proceed to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee for approval of the allocation of funds.

Members thanked the Officer for her presentation and context around the report. Following an enquiry regarding the housing of families from Afghanistan, it was explained that there were multiple resettlement schemes and those families were placed under a different scheme which was separate to that being presented at this time.

In response to a question regarding tenants being evicted under a Section 21, and whether those evictions were relevant to the asylum dispersal scheme, it was explained that whilst the information was not available immediately, Officers would undertake to liaise with the relevant team and share the response with members of both policy committees ahead of the paper being presented to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee.

A Member of the Committee shared her attendance at an event where there had also been in attendance a team from Lincoln who worked with asylum seekers, and it was enquired as to whether West Lindsey District Council worked with other areas in regards to providing support services and suchlike. It was explained that best practice was to link in with other areas and other services, and the Member was invited to share the details of the Lincoln team in order for Officers to work together where possible.

Members acknowledged there as a broad spectrum for the funding and enquired whether there was a way of assessing the use of funds to ensure the system was not abused. It was confirmed that use of the monies would be monitored, additionally, it had been identified that the council was experiencing an increase in requests for translation services, and it may be feasible for funding to be used to explore alternative options for these services. Members were also encouraged to direct residents straight to the council if they were under threat of becoming homeless through eviction or other circumstances.

With no other comments or questions, and having been proposed, seconded, and voted upon, it was

RESOLVED that the use of the community grants process to allocate funding to community groups delivering services which meet the requirements of the Asylum Dispersal Grant funding criteria be approved.

14 TEMPORARY EXCESS WASTE UPDATE (BIG BIN CLEAR OUT BBCO)

Members head from the Interim Director of Operations & Commercial Services regarding the results of the trial of Big Bin Clear Out service and the need for a decision on whether to continue. It was highlighted that over the first year, 437 1100ltr bins and 27 660ltr bins had

been hired to residents. Deliveries were spread across the district with the majority falling within the Gainsborough area, however this was due to several factors, the largest being that Thursday drop off/collections were limited to 6 due to the size of the area covered (everything east of the A15). Customer satisfaction was high with the service averaging 95% four- or five-star reviews, with a full list of comments provided within the appendices. Members also heard that since report had been published, numbers had continued to increase. It was highlighted that the service provided a small return to the council, with the options for the committee being to cease offering the service, or to adopt it as business as usual.

Members expressed their thanks to the team providing the service and praised the obvious success. It was noted that the idea had been introduced after speaking with Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council where it had been highly successful. It was recognised that, as a trial initiative, it had been managed through existing service provision and advertised with low-level communications campaigns. Should the service continue to grow, there was the chance it might put additional pressure on the team providing it. Members were assured that growth in the service could be mitigated through, for example, extending the waiting times for deliveries of the bins, however it would require monitoring and management to ensure it remained sustainable.

Further to an enquiry regarding what was acceptable to go in the bins, it was agreed this would be circulated to Members after the meeting. Additionally, it was noted that on hiring a skip, customers were required to adhere to restrictions, so this was not considered unusual for this type of service. A Member of the Committee enquired as to what work was being undertaken regarding minimising the amount of waste produced in general, expressing the request to understand what was being done to encourage people to use other routes alongside the usual waste options.

The Head of Paid Service noted his connection with Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council and congratulated the team at West Lindsey District Council for the success of the pilot project. He referenced the indirect benefits of such a scheme, for example helping to reduce fly-tipping and the use of rogue unlicensed waste collectors.

The Chairman reiterated the positive comments of the Committee, stating that the service provided a much-needed alternative between general waste collections and the use of skips. With all Members supportive of the continuation of the service, the Chairman read aloud the options contained within the report, and, having been proposed, seconded, and voted upon, it was unanimously

RESOLVED that the Big Bin service be continued and become a business-as-usual offering.

15 ONE EARTH SOLAR FARM - WLDC SUBMISSIONS

The Committee heard from the Development Management Team Manager, who also provided a presentation to Members detailing the One Earth Solar Farm development plans. It was explained that the One Earth Solar Farm (OESF) was an energy project comprising ground mounted solar photovoltaic arrays and on-site energy storage, along with associated development. It was stated to have an installed capacity of 740MW and would have its grid

connection point at the decommissioned High Marnham power station site (Nottinghamshire). The development was being undertaken by Ørsted and PS Renewables.

Members heard that the 1,409Ha site straddled the County boundary between Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire. Approximately 206Ha would fall within Lincolnshire and the district of West Lindsey. The site currently comprised arable fields to the south / south-east of Newton-on-Trent. The site's northern-most boundary was approximately 200 metres from the village. Due to its scale (>50MW), the development qualified as a 'nationally significant infrastructure project', or NSIP, with the officer highlighting that NSIPs were subject to a separate consenting regime, overseen by the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) on the behalf of the Secretary of State.

The application was submitted to PINS in February 2025 and formally accepted on 27th March 2025. It would now be subject to a public examination, overseen by an Examining Authority (ExA), scheduled to run 8 July 2025 to 8 January 2026. Following closure of the examination, the ExA would make its recommendations to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, who would make the final decision as to whether to grant a Development Consent Order (DCO).

It was noted that as part of the examination project, West Lindsey District Council, a Host Authority, was invited to submit both a Local Impact Report (LIR) and any further Written Representations (WR). The draft examination timetable set out that this should be submitted by Tuesday 29 July 2025. It was recommended to the Committee that it agreed to the submission of both a LIR and WR to be made to the OESF Public Examination, by the required deadline.

Members heard that, due to the flood risk on the site, it had been suggested that panels were raised in order to accommodate that risk. It was recommended to the Committee that submission documents were amended to incorporate more details regarding the flood risk and the impact of panels being raised.

The Chairman thanked the officer for the detailed presentation and time taken on the draft documents. Members of the Committee expressed their continued concerns regarding the level of proposed solar farm development across the district, recognising that the One Earth proposal fell mostly outside of West Lindsey, however acknowledging the cumulative impact when considered alongside the other proposals.

In response to a query regarding the grid connection, it was confirmed that the developer had been tasked with confirming those details, however this would be further commented on in the submitted documents. Additionally, it was requested that the maintenance and removal of the panels be questioned as there was no mechanism currently for the disposal of spent panels. It was noted that Lincolnshire County Council, as waste authority, had also raised the issue of disposal. The submissions from West Lindsey District Council would also highlight archaeological concerns, which, although again within the remit of the County Council, were highlighted by Members of the Committee.

In reiterating the cumulative impact of such plans, a Member of the Committee highlighted the quality of agricultural land which would be lost through the proposed development. It was recognised that other proposals had used low to lowest quality arable land, however this proposal was to be sited on top quality land. The impact of losing that land, both for

Lincolnshire farmers and food production nationally, was stated as a major concern. In addition to the loss of farming land, the negative visual impact of that land being used for solar panels was considered to be immeasurable, particularly if the panels were to be raised to mitigate the flood risks on the site.

Further discussion highlighted concerns regarding the element of battery storage, with Members noting the motion to Council which had been passed previously regarding the fire and environmental risks of what was considered to be an unknown entity, as well as the proposed lifespan of the site. At 60 years, Members enquired as to what level of future planning was involved with such a long-term proposal.

The Chairman invited comments from Visiting Members, with further concerns raised regarding the community benefits of the scheme, and whether it could be conditioned for West Lindsey to receive reparation as well as the communities over the border, as well as seeking confirmation that the site would be required to adhere to 'of the time' legislation, for example in relation to battery storage, as it was recognised there was work at a national level to introduce tighter regulations. The Member suggested a number of planning policies which could be used to further support the Council's representations, with the officer confirming all aspects could be incorporated into the final representations.

In response to a question as to how impactful the Council's submissions could be, the officer explained that, whilst the government had been clear on their focus on the solar agenda, there were examples of other proposals being amended to take into consideration concerns which had been raised. All were in agreement that the Council had to submit representations, however, it was recognised that there were wider issues outside of the influence of West Lindsey District Council.

The Chairman concluded the debate and reiterated, on behalf of all Members, his thanks to the officer and team responsible for responding to the NSIP proposals. The officer confirmed the points raised through the debate would be incorporated into the final submissions. Having been proposed and seconded, and on taking the vote, it was unanimously

RESOLVED that

- a) the submission of a Local Impact Report (LIR) to the One Earth Solar Farm DCO Examination be agreed, and authority be delegated to the Director of Planning, Regeneration and Communities to complete, finalise and submit the LIR to the Examination by the required deadline, having taken into consideration the committee's comments; and
- b) the submission of accompanying Written Representations (WR) to the One Earth Solar Farm DCO Examination be agreed, and authority be delegated to the Director of Planning, Regeneration and Communities to complete, finalise and submit the WR to the Examination by the required deadline, having taken into consideration the committee's comments.

16 WLDC ECONOMIC GROWTH STRATEGY 2025-2030

The Committee heard from the Economic Growth Team Manager, who presented the West Lindsey Economic Growth Strategy 2025-2030 and draft Action Plan for approval. It was

highlighted that the aim of the strategy was to build on the successes of the Economic Recovery Plan 2021 to 2024 and foster a dynamic, vibrant, resilient and inclusive economy that supported sustainable growth, met the challenges of climate change and fulfilled the economic potential of the district, benefiting all communities and confirming West Lindsey's role in the wider regional economy.

As part of the development of the new strategy an Economic Growth Strategy Task and Finish Group was established, with cross-party membership and representation from across the district. The purpose of the group was to provide an informal steering and collaboration forum for the development of the emerging strategy, exploring and identifying direction at each identified 'collaboration point' to inform the composition of the next element of the strategy. The final meeting of the group had taken place in June, and Members had reflected on the work of the group to date and made observations linked to final working draft strategy and Action Plan. In accordance with the group's terms of reference, the Economic Growth Strategy Task and Finish Group would now be disbanded.

The Committee received details as to how the strategy would be delivered, as well as the tracking and monitoring of delivery and measurable outcomes. Progress would be reported annually via summary information and case studies where relevant.

Members of the Committee expressed their thanks to the officers involved, as well as the Members of the task and finish group, recognising their input to what was a wide ranging and ambitious strategy. There was widespread praise for the strategy itself and the implications of what it would bring to the district. In response to a question regarding maintaining momentum and encouraging further education and skills provision to return to the area, Members were assured that conversations were underway, with partners understanding the importance of retaining young people and their skills within West Lindsey.

With Members again reiterating their thanks to all involved, as well as highlighting the successes achieved so far, and excitement for the future, the recommendations contained within the report were duly proposed and seconded. On taking the vote, it was unanimously

RESOLVED that

- a) the Economic Growth Strategy 2025-2030 and draft Action Plan be approved; and
- b) an annual infographic update on progress against the strategy be circulated via the Members Newsletter; and
- c) the Economic Growth Strategy Task and Finish Group be disbanded.

17 WORKPLAN

With no questions or comments, the work plan was **DULY NOTED**.

The meeting concluded at 8.14 pm.

Chairman